



Memorandum

TO: RULES AND OPEN
GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

FROM: COUNCILMEMBER SAM LICCARDO
COUNCILMEMBER KANSEN CHU

SUBJECT: BIRD-SAFE BUILDING
DESIGN

DATE: JUNE 4, 2014

Approved

Date

6/4/14

RECOMMENDATION:

Place an item on the June 17, 2014 City Council Agenda directing the City Manager to return to Council in six months with development guidelines that promote bird-safe building design city-wide.

DISCUSSION:

At the May 20, 2014 City Council meeting and Public Hearing regarding the Diridon Plan, 13 speakers commented about the importance of bird-safe building design, noting that both the Los Gatos Creek and Guadalupe River flow through the Diridon Plan area. They noted that the wildlife and the ecosystem of these creeks are an important asset and element to attract people to live, work and play in the area and implored Council to include bird-safe design in the Diridon Plan. This proposal goes a step further and directs that we consider bird safe guidelines City-wide.

Green building design promotes an enhanced sense of connectivity and conservation of our resources by using natural light and elements in design and building practices. Many San José building projects have sought and obtained LEED certification for being environmentally friendly, including several community centers, libraries, fire stations and the San José City Hall.

Ironically, the growing use of glass facades as a way to increase natural light has had a negative effect on surrounding wildlife. Bird strikes have increased in many cities around buildings with large amounts of glass used for their facades. Recent studies estimate that 300 million to 1 billion birds die each year in North America as a result of collision with glass windows and structures. The issue has become so pronounced that the US Green Building Council, the organization that assigns LEED certification, is revising their LEED certification such that bird friendly development and building practices are being considered for inclusion as part of the future application process. Other certification systems such as the Living Building Challenge and the

Sustainable Sites Initiative place even more value on the connection of buildings to their natural surroundings.

The City of San Jose is proud of our record of environmental accomplishments and stewardship. Our Green Vision has encouraged many properties to seek LEED certification. Staff should examine the bird-safe design guidelines that are being developed elsewhere and bring suggested guidelines to Council for acceptance or adoption. Staff should look at the Cities of San Francisco, Oakland, Sunnyvale and Portland, Oregon for examples of bird-safe guidelines that were adopted as ordinances. These guidelines are in most part flexible and allow a range of solutions, most of which are preventative in nature and inexpensive.

Our own City Hall practices bird safe practices during Falcon fledgling season, asking staff to draw blinds and shades to help prevent falcon fledglings from fatally striking glass windows. Staff should collaborate with environmental partners such as the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society and The Sierra Club in understanding bird safe design guidelines that have been adopted by other Cities and that are being considered as part of future LEED and other environmental certification programs.